

BAINES COLLEGE CONSULTING, LLC
THE IVY LEAGUE
BLUEPRINT



www.collegehelp.me



Hello there!

My name is Donna Baines, and I have worked in college admissions and financial aid for over 20 years. There is no formula that guarantees admission to an Ivy League university. Each year, thousands of students ranked #1 in their class with perfect GPAs and SAT scores are denied entry to these elite institutions.

Applying to an Ivy League school is not a decision to be made lightly. These institutions often seek a specific type of student, but the criteria can change annually. Admissions committees meet each year to determine the special interests they want to emphasize when building their freshman class. A common misconception is that colleges seek "well-rounded" students. In reality, they aim to build a well-rounded student body by admitting individuals who excel in specific areas.

In addition to seeking students with distinct talents or interests, Ivy League schools reserve several seats for legacy applicants, recruited athletes, international students, children of multi-million-dollar donors, and others with unique connections.

Before deciding to apply to an Ivy League school, ask yourself, "Why?" If you're ready to move forward, we've created a blueprint to guide you. This resource is not intended to discourage you from applying but to help you position yourself strategically for the best chance of success.

Donna Baines

Founder, Baines College Consulting, LLC

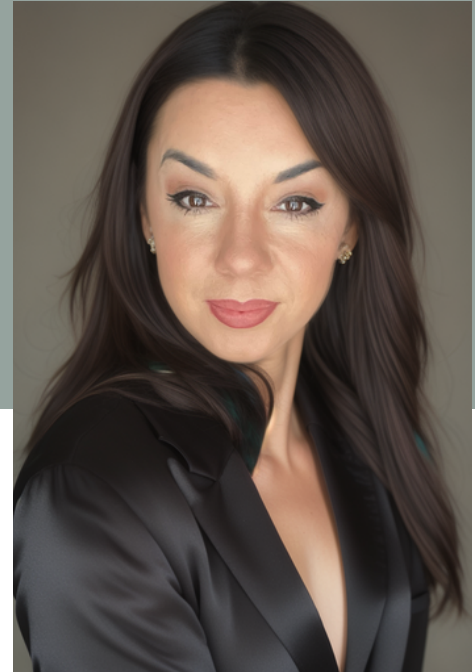


My Coaching Philosophy

I once heard a prominent guidance counselor say, "College admissions policies are like snowflakes; from a distance, they all look the same, but up close, each is unique in its design." This insight has proven true year after year. While admissions departments generally adhere to standardized best practices, the specifics of building a freshman class are highly nuanced.

My philosophy in college admissions counseling is centered on empowering students to discover their unique strengths, talents, and motivations. I believe that every student brings a distinct set of skills and perspectives to the table, and my role is to help them uncover and embrace those qualities. By fostering a student-led process, I encourage self-reflection and self-awareness, allowing students to understand who they are, what drives them, and how they can leverage their abilities to achieve their goals. This journey of self-discovery not only prepares students for college applications but also lays the foundation for personal and professional growth.

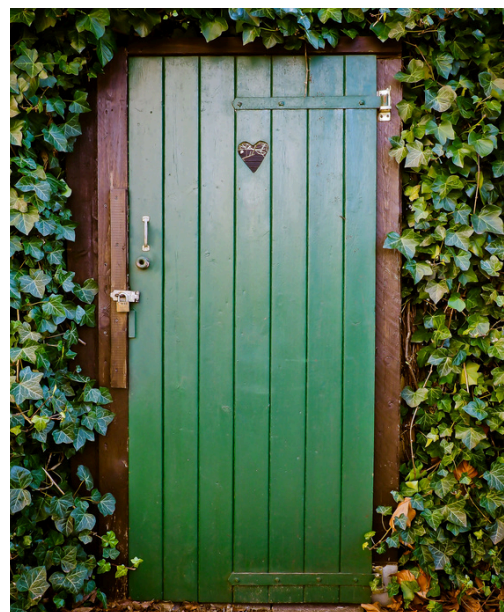
Once students have identified their aspirations, my purpose is to help them articulate these goals with clarity and confidence. Together, we create actionable plans tailored to their individual journeys, providing structure and support as they navigate the complex process of college admissions. This collaborative approach ensures that students remain at the center of their own stories, building the resilience and skills needed to succeed in college and beyond. By prioritizing a personalized, goal-oriented strategy, I aim to equip each student with the tools and mindset to thrive on their path to higher education.



“The only thing you can control, is what you can control. Focus on being the best version of YOU and I can help you package that into an application.”

Let’s start writing your story, together...

Applying to Ivies



1 UNDERSTAND WHAT IVY LEAGUE SCHOOLS LOOK FOR

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- Maintain a High GPA: Aim for a GPA of 4.0 or higher. (Note: Every high school calculates GPA differently, and many colleges recalculate GPA based on their own criteria to ensure consistency across applicants.)
- Challenging Coursework: Enroll in AP, IB, honors, or dual enrollment classes to demonstrate rigor.
- Standardized Test Scores: Aim for SAT scores of 1500+ or ACT scores of 33+.
- Class Rank: If your school ranks students, aim for the top 5% of your class. While class rank is not the sole factor, it can provide context for your academic performance.

EXTRACURRICULAR DISTINCTION

- Depth Over Breadth: Commit deeply to a few activities that showcase leadership and passion.
- National Recognition: Strive for awards or achievements that highlight your excellence, such as becoming an Eagle Scout, publishing a research paper, or earning National Merit Scholar status.
- Unique Talents: Highlight distinctive skills, such as performing arts, athletics, or scientific research.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Character and Integrity: Demonstrate resilience, empathy, and authenticity.
- Contribution to Campus: Showcase how you will enhance the school's community.
- Diversity of Thought: Highlight unique perspectives or life experiences.

RECENT ADMISSIONS STATISTICS

- Selectivity: In 2023, Ivy League schools had an average acceptance rate of 5.7%, with Harvard admitting just 3.4% of applicants.
- Test-Optional Policies: Many schools continue to use test-optional policies, but strong scores still enhance applications.
- Diversity: Over 50% of admitted students at some Ivy League schools identify as students of color.

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Build a Strategic Academic Plan

- **Choose Rigorous Courses:** Consult your school counselor to ensure your coursework aligns with Ivy League expectations.
- **Excel in Your Strengths:** Specialize in subjects related to your intended major.
- **Work With Mentors:** Seek teachers who can challenge you and eventually write strong recommendation letters.

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Develop a Compelling Extracurricular Profile

- **Pursue Leadership Roles:** Aim to lead clubs, teams, or community projects.
- **Engage in Community Service:** Demonstrate a commitment to making a difference.
- **Take Initiative:** Start your own project, such as a nonprofit, business, or research initiative.
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Craft an Exceptional Personal Statement

- **Be Authentic:** Share your genuine story and personal growth.
- **Show, Don't Tell:** Use vivid anecdotes to illustrate your points.
- **Focus on Impact:** Highlight how your experiences have shaped your goals.





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Optimize Recommendation Letters

- Choose the Right Recommenders: Select teachers who know you well and can speak to your strengths.
- Provide Context: Share your achievements and goals with them to inform their letters.
- Follow Up: Send polite reminders and thank-you notes.

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Prepare for Interviews

- Research the School: Familiarize yourself with its programs and culture.
- Practice Common Questions: Prepare responses that highlight your character and fit.
- Show Enthusiasm: Demonstrate genuine interest in the school.



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Apply Strategically

- Early Decision/Action: If you have a clear top choice, consider applying early.
- Tailor Applications: Customize essays for each school to align with their values. Emphasize creating a cohesive theme throughout your application that ties together your academic interests, extracurriculars, and personal story to present a unified narrative.
- Double-Check Details: Ensure every part of your application is accurate and polished.

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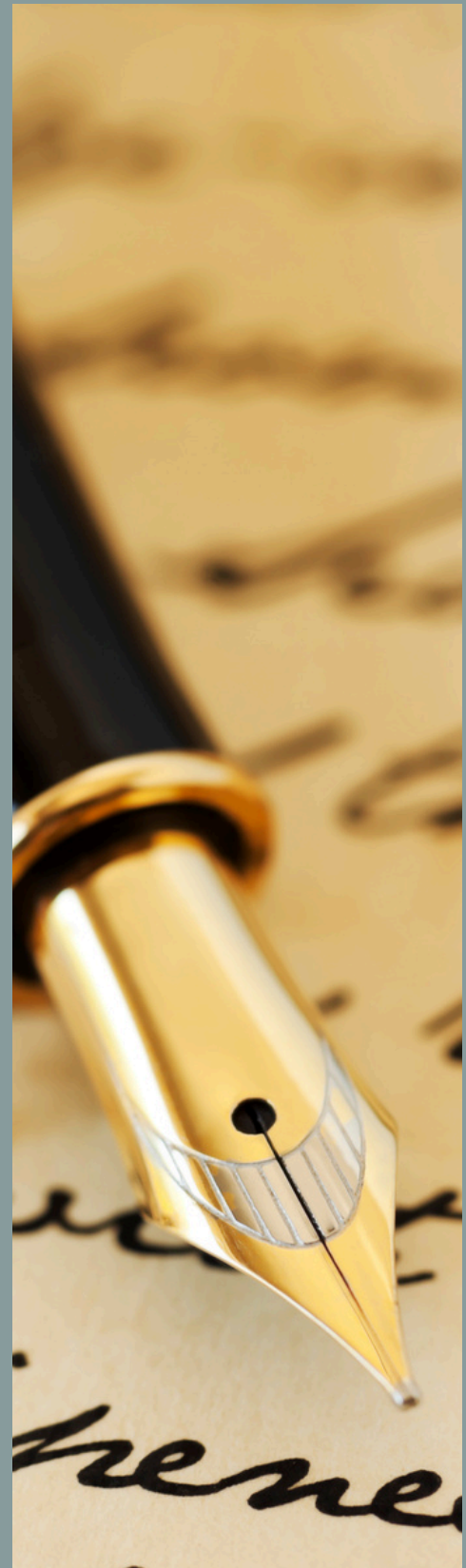
Stand Out With Supplemental Materials

- **Submit a Portfolio:** Share your creative work, such as art, writing, or music.
- **Include Research:** Highlight any published work or scientific discoveries.
- **Showcase Athletics:** Provide video footage or stats if you're a recruited athlete.

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Highlight Special Interests and Underrepresented Backgrounds

- **Niche Talents:** Unique hobbies or expertise, such as chess championships or drone racing, can differentiate your application.
- **Research and Publications:** In-depth work in a specific field demonstrates passion and initiative.
- **Creative Pursuits:** Exceptional achievements in art, music, or writing add diversity to your profile.
- **Share Your Story:** Highlight how your background has shaped your perspectives and aspirations.
- **Seek Support Programs:** Explore initiatives like QuestBridge or other diversity-focused scholarships.
- **Emphasize Contribution:** Showcase how your experiences will enrich the campus community.



Step 1: Academic Excellence

- Maintain a high GPA (aim for 3.9+).
- Take challenging coursework (AP, IB, honors, or dual enrollment classes).
- Score well on standardized tests (SAT 1500+ or ACT 33+).
- Aim for top 5% class rank if your school ranks students.

Step 2: Strategic Academic Plan

- Choose rigorous courses aligned with Ivy League expectations.
- Excel in subjects related to your intended major.
- Work with mentors who can write strong recommendations.

Step 3: Extracurricular Distinction

- Pursue leadership roles in clubs, teams, or projects.
- Engage in impactful community service.
- Create a personal project (nonprofit, business, or research initiative).
- Earn national recognition (e.g., Eagle Scout, publications, National Merit Scholar).

Step 4: Personal Statement

- Write an authentic essay with vivid anecdotes.
- Focus on how experiences shaped your goals.
- Proofread for clarity and impact.

Step 5: Recommendation Letters

- Choose teachers who know you well.
- Share your achievements and goals with them.
- Send reminders and thank-you notes.

Step 6: Interviews

- Research the school's programs and culture.
- Prepare answers to common interview questions.
- Show genuine enthusiasm and interest.

Step 7: Application Strategy

- Decide on Early Decision/Action for top-choice schools.
- Tailor essays to align with each school's values.
- Ensure your application has a cohesive theme.
- Double-check for accuracy and polish.

Step 8: Supplemental Materials

- Submit a creative portfolio if applicable (art, writing, music).
- Include research or publications.
- Provide athletic stats or footage if recruited.

Step 9: Special Interests/Diversity

- Emphasize niche talents or achievements.
- Share your unique background and perspectives.

Applying to Ivies Checklist

Why Work with Me

We know the admissions process can be long and confusing. Baines College Consultants have the background and experience to help students make sense of the process and achieve admissions success. We help students and parents understand their audience and submit compelling applications that set them apart from other applicants.

We are a boutique business so you can trust that your consultant will truly get to know YOU!

Baines College Consulting began as a part-time charitable service offered to students who wanted professional guidance when applying for colleges and accessing funds to help pay for it. Donna Baines, Founder, spent 10 years working as a Corporate Director in college admissions with juniors and seniors in High School before going independent in 2014. Her background as Regional Admissions Director helped in creating and training motivational seminars that would encourage students to complete high school and continue their education. She hired and trained admissions representatives in markets such as Philadelphia, Newark, Trenton, Houston, Dallas, Birmingham, Montgomery, and Akron. In addition to working with individual students, Baines College Consulting partners with local school districts, non-profit organizations, and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia to offer complete college and career planning services.



Testimonials

Jinell G.



Ms. Baines was so beyond helpful with getting me into YALE UNIVERSITY. I was guided on everything from what I needed help with to things I didn't know I needed help with. She helped shape and refine my application to perfection. She was available at such random hours in order to help ME reach deadlines! I am from Camden NJ. I went to a charter school where no one had ever gone to an Ivy League. I told her my goals and she never doubted me. She's the best. She still checked up on me after I got accepted. She so genuine! I have nothing but amazing things to say about her. You need her and you won't regret using her!!

Anthony D.

Donna was extremely helpful in building all of my college applications. I was accepted into 8 of the 11 schools I applied for, including Purdue University where I attended and graduated from in 2021. She is very dedicated and consistent when it comes to finding the right fit for you. I cannot praise her enough and highly recommend meeting with her!



Marta T.

So grateful for your incredible expertise, professionalism and follow through! From beginning to end, your insight into the process was invaluable. From the college applications to the grueling FAFSA and making sure we didn't lose out on any medical accommodations, you were all over the details. Not to mention the critical role you played as a mediator between two divorced parents who may not have been able to remain as amicable as they normally do ;) Looking forward to an amazing future for Abby at Georgetown. Who knew that the most expensive college she applied to could give her the best scholarship! Donna knew. Thank you!!

Let's Get Started!

Getting into an Ivy League school requires more than stellar grades; it's about demonstrating who you are and the impact you'll make. Finding the right college fit is crucial to long-term success and happiness. Remember to prepare backup plans by applying to a range of schools, including those that match your academic, social, and financial needs. By following this blueprint, you can create an application that truly stands out. Remember, the journey is as important as the destination—embrace every step with confidence and determination.

[SCHEDULE A ZOOM](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)

Donna has over 20 years of college admissions and financial aid experience. She has helped thousands of high school students all over the United States with their college and career goals.

Donna

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